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October 27, 2004

To: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman
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From: David Sanders, Ph.D.
Director

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "David Sanders", is written over the printed name and title.

JANUARY 27, 2004 BOARD AGENDA ITEM #S-2: DCFS EDUCATION UNIT

On January 27, 2004, your Board directed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to make quarterly reports on the creation, staffing and efforts of the newly created Education Unit within the Department. This is the third quarterly report.

In an effort to maximize the number of youth entitled to free tutoring resources through the Federal No Child Left Behind Act, the Education Unit petitioned the Juvenile Court to share identifying information with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) in order to ascertain a comprehensive list of youth shared by both agencies. The Court granted the request and efforts were made to encourage caregivers to sign up the youth enrolled in the 111 Program Improvement Schools in LAUSD before the September 30th deadline. The Department is awaiting the resulting totals from LAUSD.

The Department and LAUSD are developing a partnership plan to establish a working relationship through which we may address the approximately 15,000 youth both agencies have in common. The plan includes sharing data to improve the academic achievement of the shared youth, which historically has been an insurmountable challenge. Both agencies have committed their legal counsels to meet and work together to resolve the differences. In addition, in order to address specific individual educational and school issues, the plan will formalize the working relationship between the LAUSD Foster Care Unit, the Children's Social Workers, and the anticipated DCFS contracted Education Specialists.

The Education Unit has been an active participant in the formation and implementation of the Education Coordinating Council (ECC). These efforts are materializing with the

Council establishing its home base at the Los Angeles County Children's Planning Council Foundation and hiring a second consultant team member. Contracts for the ECC's Program Director and Data/Information consultants are being finalized. Both are expected to begin work by mid-November. Meetings with key stakeholder groups have been held and information and ideas were gathered about the direction of the Council. This input will be presented, along with the recommendations generated by the second Education Summit at an organizational meeting of the ECC in November.

The Education Unit with County Counsel provided training on the requirements for nonpublic school enrollment to the Department's Assistant Regional Administrators. The training was conducted to ensure that any child enrolled in a nonpublic school is legally required to be enrolled, and to ascertain the number of youth the Department currently has enrolled in nonpublic schools. These numbers are still being collected.

Contract development continues to formalize an agreement between the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) Foster Youth Services (FYS) and DCFS, in order to increase the number of group home youth served by FYS. DCFS has made a commitment of funds to LACOE, to augment the SB933 funds provided by the State. FYS responsibilities focus on group home youth and include increasing attendance by assisting in the school enrollment process, decreasing truancy, collecting information for the Health and Education Passport binder, and reviewing school records to analyze academic credits in preparation for high school graduation. The anticipated start date of November 2004, for the expansion of these services, may be slightly delayed.

In addition, the Department is moving forward in contract development and outreach to hire eight independent Education Specialists. This number will provide one Specialist for each Service Planning Area (SPA) to provide assistance to Children's Social Workers and caregivers on educational issues for the children we serve. They will be persons versed in navigating the school systems, addressing special education and Individualized Educational Program (IEP) concerns, literacy issues, and school readiness. They will advocate for additional services within the school systems for our children, as needed, and assist with access to school records and transcripts as well as address coursework credit matters, to name a few of their duties. The Education Specialists will be housed in our DCFS regional offices. The anticipated start date for this program is April 2005.

Ongoing responsibilities of the Education Unit include representing the Department's interests at education based meetings with Dependency Court, other County agencies, Children's Law Center, LACOE, LAUSD and other school districts, School Attendance Review Boards (SARBs), and other stakeholders. In addition, the Unit works with the Reading Is Fundamental Program, Operation Read, Early Start to Emancipation Program (ESTEP), the Enrichment Plus Program, locating tutoring resources, promoting the use of the Health and Education Passport and website development.

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The Department appreciates your Board's support to improve the educational and academic outcomes for the children we serve. We look forward to working together to enhance their educational opportunities and better their opportunities for achieving productive adult lives.

If you have questions, please call me or your staff may contact Helen Berberian, Manager of Board Relations at (213) 351-5530.

DS:CS:
PM:pm

c: Chief Administrative Officer
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel